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1. Bolo ti doniya ye dali duru sira ye, bolokoni kumba daga ye dyɛ saba gundo ye, tyemasa bolokoni ye dyɛ dura ye.

yo, of which only the first is realized (2).

2. On the worlds thought out by yo, see pp. 23-26.

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On another level, the signs of the thumb are related to powers and those of the index to royal domains (fig. 1, nos. 8-12):

1. Sign zero (fu) represents the beginning of creation, the origin of all things. A curved segment extended from left to right denotes the dynamic quality of the universe. It is intersected by a multiplication sign expressing the infinite development of beings and things. But the vertical stroke crossing it on the left indicates both the cessation and the suppression of the whole (no. 11).

2. Sign of lightning. It expresses royal power and justice and is traced under the thumb ring of the king. The latter, when giving an order, would swing his hand, which means he is swinging lightning before those he addresses (no. 12).

3. Sign of the royal domain. The opening asserts the possible extension of the kingdom; the transversal bar is a protection of this kingdom from all destruction (no. 8).

4. Sign of the extension of this domain at the tree cardinal sides: east, west, and south (no. 9).

5. Sign of union. The oval represents the whole group of functionaries called todyɔ and barodɛ, officers and councilors who administer the kingdom under the king's authority (no. 10).

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[783]

As the feet are constantly in touch with the soil, they take on its impurity. An individual who has gone through severe purifications will need to avoid putting his feet on the ground during a period of time occasionally quite prolonged, for "to place one's toes on the ground is to put one's soul in contact with the impure earth" (1). It

[241]

1. The invention of the shoe is mythically linked to the notion of the earth's impurity; the wearer must therefore avoid this contact.

[p. 22, category 116 — Analyst.]

773 286 [782] The loom was invented later. The positions of the warp and woof and the practice of breaks and knots were modified. The loom was formerly the object of nocturnal human sacrifices whereas the shuttle received lesser sacrifices in the day time (1).

1. At present, looms are set in the ground above a piece of pottery, the bottom of which is pierced before the pot is buried.

The stone on which women clean the cotton, kaba, represents the sky and recalls the divine origin of cotton and of the technology relating to it.

Clothing

291 Clothing which has intimate contact with the human body is a part of the person wearing it. On the other hand, the material of which it is made, and the various elements which compose it and which are associated with one or another aspect of Bambara metaphysics, exercise an influence on the wearer. The choice of clothing is rarely a matter of chance or individual taste and the various manifestations of social or religious life usually obligate people to wear appropriate clothing, the symbolism of which is linked to the action or circumstance under consideration. The role of the garment appears as early as infancy: a newborn wears around his loins a cotton thread, dyura dyuru, which is both a protection (for it "solidifies his spinal column") and a foreshadowing of what he will wear later. When he reaches the required age, a family reunion takes place on the day he is dressed for the first time. Before this, it is necessary for him to have dreamed of his first garment and to have talked to his mother of this dream; she then begins to spin the necessary cotton. Before dressing, the initiate proceeds with an ablution called mayadyi (literally, water of the person's action) in water taken from the Niger or from a pond of Faro's. The dressed child is told "that he is now a man and may become a member of the ndomo (2)"; then his kinsfolk tease

2. Society of the uncircumcised (see p. 222).

291 him and joke with him, indicating by semi-ritual jokes his accession to a new status.

291 773 Men's first garment was the skirt of nyama fibers (Fig. 8, A). The bark was beaten and prepared by means of a club, a wooden club, gosilande or kuruninde, which is /106/ supposed "to contain potentially all human technology invented as the need arose." It is said of this club that it is "the mold of perfection and the place from which all useful things issue." The club was also originally a primitive instrument of rhythm (1); the hammering of blows "chased away the evil

[783] 1. kow dyele bwo yoro. On certain occasion when the Komo masks are brought out, the chief carries on his head the gosilande which represents the universe. Certain collective purifications are also executed with this instrument at the crossroads (see p. 186).

[755] sounds emitted by Téliko at the time of his revolt." Even today, a deafmute is seated near the gosilande which is prayed to so that he may be rid of his infirmity. The clothing of a woman in labor, in [844] order to purify it, is beaten with the gosilande at the same time the infant utters its first cry. Dyed clothing is beaten not only to make the color penetrate, but also to chase out any impurity.

When they first learned about cotton, and after the invention of weaving, the Bambara made garments which are in disuse today but of which they still make specimens for ritual purposes. In fact, with the exception of the loincloth, these ancient garments are worn only during religious ceremonies and their principal function is to represent the ancestors who were their progenitors.

291 773 386 The first garment woven was an imitation of the fiber skirt. The men made loincloth (mboko nimba) still worn today by the uncircumcised and dyed it yellow, wolo (2) (Fig. 8, B), a color which

[824] 2. This dye is made with the leaves of the ngalama (Angeissus leiocarpus), which are boiled, dried, and pulverized. The powder is put in water.

represents that which a certain disease gives to the black's skin,

which they got rid of by means of this dye. A live swallow was immersed in the liquid, which was obtained by soaking the leaves and to which was mixed ground charcoal, and later was released, thus consecrating the dye into which the loincloth was soaked.

The next garment was made of two strips, dyo kama (literally, shoulder nets), which were hooked on to each arm. The strip on the right arm, representing male, was attached by three thin straps (male number). The other was attached by four straps, four and left being female. The wearer would lie down over the strip on the right side

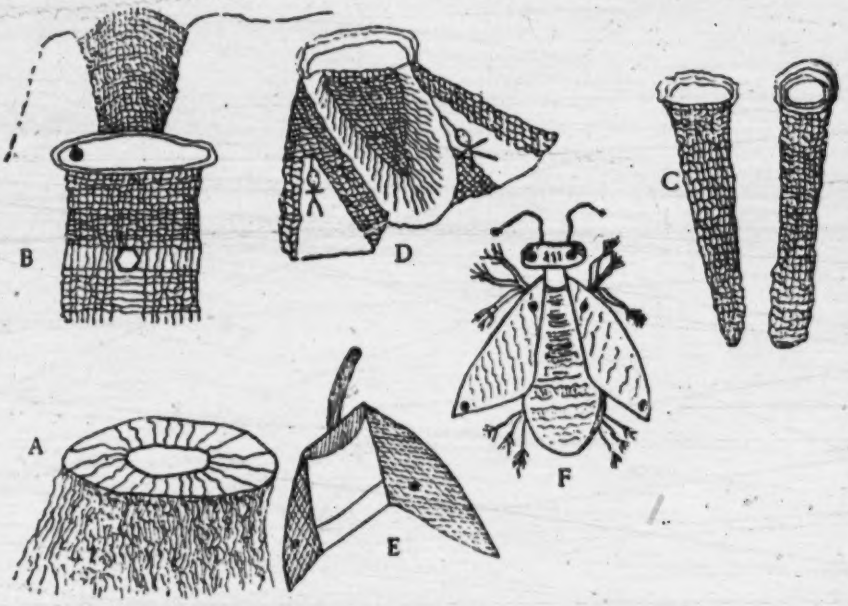

Fig. 8 — Ancient Clothing of the Bambara.
(A) The skirt of nyama fibers; (B) the loincloth; (C) the "shoulder nets"; (D) the tunic; (E) the bonnet are made of dyed and woven cotton threads. (F) the dung beetle, an insect which plays a part in geomancy. (Drawing by an informant).

and would cover himself with that on the left (Fig. 8, C).

Next, men made a kind of short tunic, wolo kama (literally, partridge wings), which was dyed red (Fig. 8, D). At the top of the openings where the arms passed were suspended /107/ two little figures (mani) carved out of wood. These represented the souls of the wearer, "took their life from the veins, and gave their strength to the

291 773 arms on which they rested." The center of the garment represented the chest, the liver, and the heart of the wearer; the horizontal threads the veins and arteries. The supporting collar, made of three bark fibers of the da tree, was "the individual's double during his sleep." Sweat was the offering made to this garment. In the cold season it was replaced by salt. The first time a man wore this garment he would pray: "Garment, we wear you in the name of our old ancestors and in honor of those who created you."

The ancestors drawn on the sanctuaries and the granaries are all equipped with caps, banfla, which they wore in olden times (Fig. 8, E). At the top were affixed a wooden picket and a hyena tail, through which the sky gave its strength to man who in return /108/ would send his "through the wind." The cap (čema), made of strips of yellow dyed cotton, had wings (bamadae), symbol of the ears: the lines on the right wing assured numerous offspring and those on the left, a secure and righteous life. The wings also recall those of the swallow, the water spirit's messenger entrusted with carrying into the womb, at the moment of sexual union, the drop of blood containing the child's life and soul. The two indigo dyed spots on each wing are the symbol of this womb.

The cap as a whole (farofla) was the "link maintaining the life of man," who is himself represented by the line which encircles the cap. It protected him against cold, disaster, and death. It was also the symbol of Faro's home and power. When he received it, the wearer would say: "Wing of the cap, cap, son of Faro, I have drawn you with strength. Oh, swallow" (1).

1. Bamade, bonza, farodę, ni be ke ola ni barikaye, nanale. The primitive clothes described above were observed by an informant at Bougoula and are presented to the postulants at the moment of their initiation.

After the invention of the loom, clothes were no longer made piece by piece. Bands of cotton made by weavers were used, cut up, fitted, and sewn—a technique still observed today throughout the Sudan.

291 773 531 There exists a "science of the bands," finew tno or finew dongo, which is familiar to all those who wear the traditional clothes. It

291 rests upon the knowledge of the symbolism of colors, drawings, and
773 numbers. The bands are numerous and each one represents one aspect
531 of metaphysics, one fragment of the myth. Thus, the story of Mousso Koroni is told in four successive bands (Pl. III, from 5 to 8). The wearing of the bands depends upon the physical or moral state of the wearer, upon his functions and activities (1).

1. We give below the description of a certain number of these bands, chosen from the ones most representative; we intend to publish a complete study of this aspect of a technique most revealing of Sudanese psychology.

291 The white band, finin muku dye, represents Faro, being as white
773 and luminous as the sky and the rays of the sun. White denotes wis-
531 dom and purity of the spirit, the purity of blood. The one who ap-
522 pears in public thus dressed is respected because he affirms thereby his desire to follow religious rules. It is also the color of offerings made to the spirit. A piece of white cloth is sometimes hung over the door of a home where people have just /109/ made a sacrifice. A sick man throws three white bands into the river, or gives them to a person poorer than himself. A white cloth, worn over a man's shoulder, "strengthens his nerves and articulations." At nightfall every evening, all the children put on a tunic of this color. Thus, despite the darkness, they are "in Faro's light" and will recognize each other in times to come as the children of one father, one family, one blood. The marriage veil is made up of eleven bands each measuring eleven cubits; these are not sewn together but rather basted in spirals. Thus dressed, the woman goes in the night to her future husband's village, in the luminous word of Faro and surrounded by the twenty-two elements of creation, the eleven spirals intersecting each other on the right and left. A dead person is also dressed in white: trousers with six strips representing man and his dya, and a hat with three bands. He is rolled up in a blanket of the same color and visitors place upon the corpse pieces of white cloth or cowrie shells. The whole signifies good will, sincerity, and devotion toward Faro of the deceased who must be "white under the earth" if he has not broken any taboos.

The opposite of white is indigo, konofi, which symbolizes darkness and impurity and which is worn in most cases where the spirit's

activity is not involved. Nevertheless, a woman puts on an indigo loincloth the day she resumes sexual relations with her husband after the end of her menses; she retains it until pregnancy. When she is sure of her condition, she puts the loincloth in the sun to purify it and will place the newborn child in it to remind him later that he owes his life to his parents. A dead person who has broken a taboo is buried in an indigo shroud, the only reminder of light being a white cotton thread which is placed on the corpse as an expression of apology and forgiveness. Since indigo is taboo in most of Faro's sacred places, no one wears it during sacrifices or religious ceremonies.

White and indigo complement each other. To twist a white and an indigo thread together to make a string used for holding an amulet is to "roll together happiness and unhappiness, as in life."

The dye wolo is the color of yellow copper. It is in this color that the newly circumcised are dressed after the operation and until they are healed. Red, mbegu, is the color of copper and of blood. Hunters who wear a tunic of mbegu are "covered with a garment of blood." The band kayo (Pl. III, a, 1), in which are found these two colors, indigo and white, reproduces the rainbow: the white intervals are symbols of the word and of purity. /110/ A person making a sacrifice sews a piece of this band on his clothing to indicate that he is circumcised, that he is a hunter, and that he is truthful in his actions and words. A band is hung at the gate of the northern entry to the village in order to protect its inhabitants from dangers coming from outside. A man wears it when he has been ill or has suffered serious financial or family difficulties. On the altars, on the doorways, the colors are represented by millet mash, blood, and kola nut extract. As the rainbow keeps away the rain and dries up water, the kayo strip may not be worn near the river or during sexual intercourse, for it is Faro's taboo.

The band sirakele (literally, a road) (Pl. III, a, 2) represents Faro's descent from the seventh part of the sky down to the seventh part of the earth, the indigo stripe being the dyi fi, "black water," the spirit's earth seat. When put on the loincloth of a married woman, it expresses her rectitude and the good behavior she intends to maintain towards her husband. When worn by a traveler, it prevents him from losing his way.

The buguni (1) (Pl. III, a, 3) is "the sun ray Faro gave to Pemba

1. The word designates the band's place of origin, Bougouni.

291 773 821 531 for his great earthly labors." When clouds form, it is said that Faro "is showing the buguni in the sky" and the diviners advise each person to wear a strip in homage to the spirit and to facilitate the coming of rain. The geomaneer gently rubs the earth, where he is going to draw signs, with a cloth of this design. It is as though he has injected sun, light, and truth into the work he must execute on the impure soil.

291 773 This band is also called kolõso mako, "necessity of the mixture," or kami, guinea hen, whose plumage as well as whose fragility the band betokens. In this respect, the buguni symbolizes man's weakness and incompleteness. When placed on a convalescent's clothing, [155] it signifies that the latter has lost some of his vitality during his illness. Dressed in this fashion, he goes to the Niger and bathes so that Faro might heal him. A man who has suffered severe financial losses also wears the buguni. At the market, in public meetings, he will not be made to pay his share of beer because of the band's silent language which is clearer than words. If a widower remarries, he sews a piece of it on his cap in memory of his first wife. The knife of the person offering a sacrifice is wrapped in the buguni, for it "never has enough blood," also in certain boli which continually crave it.

/111/ In conclusion, the squares of indigo cloth represent the void and darkness; the white ones, fulfillment and light. To wear the buguni signifies hope, the impure or weak man hoping to become pure, strong, and fulfilled.

The bugunimba (literally, large buguni) or nyedẽ (literally, threads of the eye) has the same symbolism. A wound is bandaged with it. A man who has broken a taboo wears a cap of this material; an illegitimate child also wears it. The buguni tyekorole which symbolizes the impurity of Mousso Koroni is used to implore Faro's help in great calamities and for misfortunes without remedy. Thus, the body of a stillborn child is covered with it.

291 773 822 801 The buguni nyama (Pl. III, a, 4), made of twenty-two alternating indigo and white squares, symbolizes creation in its harmonious and orderly entirety. Its separation into two layers recalls the duality of nature, represented by a thin stripe through the middle. A happy man sews an entire strip into his tunic. The man who has difficulties of any kind divides it lengthwise and pins a small piece at the bottom of his garment.

291 773 822 801 The nyeba, "big eye," or koloso tyema, "mixed masculinity" (with femininity), (Pl. III, a, 11) also represents creation, here symbolized by the double layer of five indigo and white bands (1). At

1. On the value of number 5, see pp. 24, 25.

the same time the cloth also symbolizes the complete man, said to be both masculine and feminine. A newborn child, but never an illegitimate one, is clothed in it.

291 773 The band soli (Pl. III, a, 5) represents the good conduct of Mousso Koroni at the beginning of her life as well as her betrayal which brought disorder on earth.

[764] In olden times, people who had committed bad deeds were obliged to wear it. Today it is used as the shroud for a child who dies immediately after birth; a strip is sewn to the garment of a recently excised girl or to the loincloth of a woman insured in childbirth. When differences or conflicts arise within a family, a fragment is placed in amulets which the women must then wear.

[828] The wutu nyekorotike (Pl. III, a, 6) pictures the disorderly voyage of Mousso Koroni, her despair and her madness. This pattern is reserved for insane people in order to warn others of their condition.

The band gombo (Pl. III, a, 7) recalls the pursuit of Mousso /112/ Koroni by the god Pemba into the depths of the sky and the earth.

The band tyatyeli (Pl. III, a, 8) a picture of Mousso Koroni's defeat, symbolizes human work. It is given to a courageous and energetic woman. It is circulated among those present at religious ceremonies and its mere presence indicates that nothing here below is obtained without work and that all stems from work. To wear this band strengthens the man who is entering upon a task in a village other than his own.

The band saki is the koblenkaba, "red sky." It symbolizes heat, anger, difficulties, and sorrows. It is woven at the time of marriage negotiations for the purpose of resolving any differences of opinion.

[844] A piece of it is dipped into the blood after birth and then thrown away in order to purify everything.

[822] The blue stripes of dyitala represent impurity, and the red stripes, purification by sacrifice. Whoever has broken a taboo wears the blue, and the red when he is purified. A piece of red cloth may be inserted into the vagina of a young woman, after she has lost her virginity or

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to replace the blood lost in childbirth; this piece is then burned to hasten the healing of the wounds.

The loincloth of a woman who has given birth to twins is made of the sukaba band with large, regular, alternating squares of yellow and indigo. The mother places on the garment as an offering a little of the millet mash she feeds her children for the first time.

The band nyoronga was formerly used for shrouds. The king would wear a whole garment of this or had three bands sewn onto his tunic when he went off to war; thus he wore his own shroud. A brave man would tie a piece of it to the barrel of his rifle to show his indifference in the face of death. A strip was tied to the right hand of those killed on the battlefield as a reward for having done their duty. Today, a shred of this band is hung at the door of a home where a death has occurred; People bandage a wounded limb with it before going to the healer's.

The wutu tyerokole with three stripes is worn by a child born after the death in infancy of numerous brothers and sisters. It represents the departure of these members of the family and their return in the newborn. Shaking such a band in the air honors the seventh sky and the seventh earth and asks their protection for the child. This cloth is never worn at funerals.

/113/ The kemba (literally, mother of scarifications) (Pl. III, a, 10) substitutes for scarifications when it has not been possible to perform them; on the other hand, this band is taboo to those who are ritually scarred.

The warabawolo (Pl. III, a, 12) represents the lion of the Diara: the first son of this family was born on this cloth. A boy born with a lock of hair on his forehead is seated on the cotton band to make him strong and rich. Formerly the king made a rug for his throne out of it. Since the lion is their taboo, the Diara do not have the right to wear it or even to see it.

Weapons and Tools

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Originally, men lived by hunting and fishing. But hunger drove them to eat plants of which the first three are the yayalẽ, an aquatic plant commonly found on the shores of the Niger; the narakata, couch grass; and the norolã size, commonly called cramcram(1). Long

1: Dieterlen--153a E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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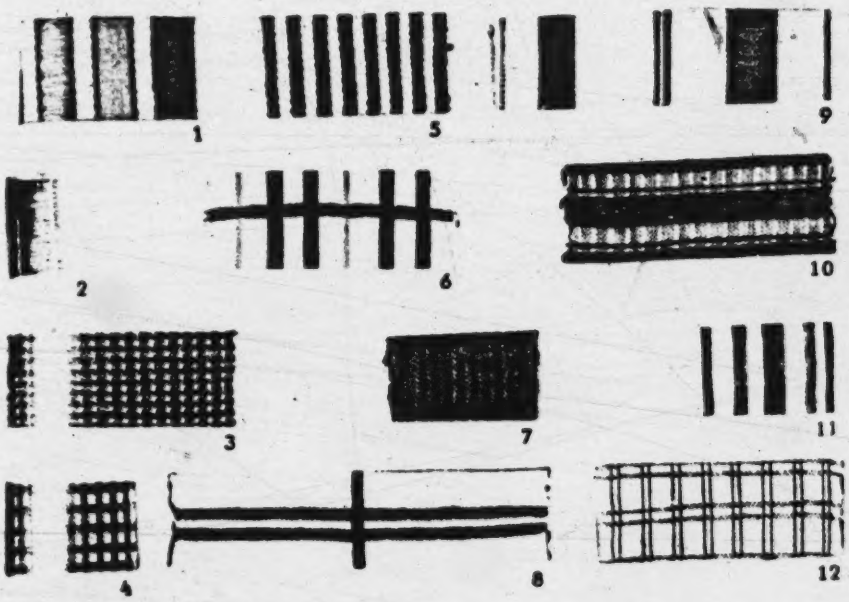

(a) Bands of cotton (the warp is presented vertically).

Plate III

(b) Offering of a band of cotton to the dasiri tree (Soroba).

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1: Dieterlen--153b E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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(a) Pot dipping after firing (Konodimini).

Plate IV

(b) Communal anvil, kula, of the blacksmiths (Konodimini).

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*173 several occasions and suspected the truth; so he used a trick. He pretended to take a bath and, while the water was running out, looked outside. He saw the child beneath the gutter and struck him with his iron-tipped stick.

Ngolo was terrified and ran off to tell his story to Danté Balo. The good woman interceded with Mamari and persuaded him to relent. Nevertheless, Mamari decided to separate from his favorite and summoned Kolé, the leader of the sofa, to whom he entrusted the child, saying: "Here's a bad boy; don't be afraid to make him work hard."

One day, when he had taken the bila-koro (1) in his

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1. A young boy old enough to be circumcised and wearing a piece of cloth called bila between his legs, instead of trousers.

charge to the field to cut fodder, Kolé sat down in a place called Sirani-n-tu (lit., forest of the little baobab tree) after the small baobab tree which grew there in the middle of a grove. The spirit of the place, who lived in the baobab tree, appeared to Kolé and said: "If you come tomorrow to this same spot and if you bring me a white ram, a white rooster and some rice, I will make it possible for you to become king of Ségou." Now Ngolo, who was wandering about nearby, had seen and heard everything. When he returned to Ségou he ran weeping to Danté Balo; when she asked what was the matter, he answered that a spirit had threatened to kill him unless he sacrificed a white ram, a white rooster and some rice. "Ah well," she said, "Cheer up, here's a white rooster and some rice, and you can take the ram from the master's flock. If anyone is surprised at seeing you with a ram, just say that I gave it to you." He followed her advice and arrived on time at the rendezvous, which Kolé, on the other hand, had forgotten.

After killing the rooster and the ram, in accordance with the rites with which he was familiar, and offering the rice, Ngolo saw the genie appear, while a distant voice said: "Ah, it's you, friend Kolé (2), I'm glad to see you obey my orders and, in return,

2. It is interesting to note that the genie

881 At the end of this time, the nyana-n-son-na-ba and his council having come to an agreement with the sema to end the period of seclusion, each leader performs certain magic passes, under the boys' tree and near the girls' huts, to dispel any evil. The Bambara are convinced that so long as the period of convalescence is not officially closed the circumcised boys or excised girls are as much a danger to society as society is to them; that is why they must spend this period in seclusion. Furthermore, anything used by them during their seclusion is impregnated with this evil and may spread it.

881 783

Therefore, as soon as the interdict is lifted, everything is collected to be burned at sunset (2).. Near the trees outside

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2. However, personal effects (the boys' kursi, dloki, and baufla, and the girls' tafe) are not burned; along with their stains, these are impregnated with virtues which make them particularly valuable for talismans, amulets, and other magic weapons.

the village the mats, the n-koso-m-bara, the gourds, millet stalks, rags, etc., are all piled up, and the nyana-n-son-na-ba sets them afire. The boys and girls jump over the fire three times; they are then free to return to the village. They run home promptly to adorn themselves for the festival celebrating their return.

881 Once more there are lavish meals and interminable drinking bouts, followed by a general gathering in the public square. People come from all directions, among them appallingly decrepit old women who try to manage everything. [247]

[291] On this occasion, the boys, soli-ma-tye, appear for the first time in true man's attire, full trousers, cap with earlaps, and an ample new shirt. With lance in hand, they swagger about and simulate the behavior of warriors; they are now tye-kura, "new men."

881 301 The girls also are decked out to excess in women's attire. Wearing several skirts and adorned with all the jewelry relatives

[End Plate 1]

Fig. 1. Young Bambara from Djenné Region.

Fig. 2. Bambara with the cap known as bamma da (crocodile's tail), Djenné Region.

2: Monteil--382 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Fig. 3. Bambara girls in outdoor dress, Djenné Region.

Fig. 4. Bambara women and girls about to set down burdens carried on their heads, Djenné Region.

Plate 2

[End Plate 2]

412 831 the peasant digs with the male hoe and covers with the female hoe; the work done with the female double of the peasant and the male double of the wife symbolizes the sexual union. (1)

1. M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen, "L'agriculture des Bozo," [Bozo Agriculture] Journal des Africanistes [Ed., Journal de la Société des Africanistes, 1949.]

d. Basketry

285 Basketry is done by everyone, men and women; it plays a large part in the construction and furnishing of the house. Sometimes the lofts are immense baskets, woven on the diagonal. In certain regions a great mat is wrapped around the exterior wall of the round hut. The doors of mud huts are often coarse mats woven diagonally [531] which are placed before the opening. But much finer mats, made from fibers of different colors and with geometric designs with a symbolic meaning, cover the ground for sitting or sleeping.

e. Weaving, Clothes, Ornaments

291 [824] The first article of clothing was the fiber skirt made from the nyama (Bauhinia reticulata, or Bauhinia thonningii) and the covering for the sexual parts which are still worn during religious ceremonies.

[773] Mythology designates cotton as the first fiber to be woven.

286 Weaving is one of the most widespread techniques. Cotton, spun by the women, is woven by the men, in olden times by the captives, who work in the open air near the huts, in the shade of trees in the courtyards or in the public places. A primitive loom made of four vertical wooden parts connected by horizontal shafts and driven by pedals weaves long bands. The warp and woof form a ground stich and symbolize a being of intelligence and eloquence. Moreover, a science of the bands exists which is based on the symbolism of colors, designs, and numbers.

822 The Bambara distinguish three fundamental colors: white, red, and black. Each of these three tints has its history and its role

822 in the rites. "Red is the color of the middle regions of the world. It characterizes dry heat; it is the color of anger and of justice, that of the king, center of the kingdom." Black or indigo (2) is

2. Zahan, Les couleurs chez les Bambara du Soudan français [Colors Among the Bambara of the French Sudan], Notes Africaines, 1951.

identified with the North and the [98] rainy season. It evokes impurity, obscurity. It denotes sadness and the end of labor. The South accords with the ancestors and the color white which represents light and purity; it is the color of Faro. The whole system
286 of bands woven from different colored threads according to various
822 designs translates the different conditions of the wearer, for each band has its own history, its definite use, and its cosmogonic correspondences. The study of this was begun by G. Dieterlen in Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion] and is being
• 291 pursued at the present time. Today the form of clothing varies according to the age and sex of the wearer. Young children are nude, with the loins girt with a cotton string or with a belt of blue beads or cowry shells. Sometimes, two small copper bells attract the protection of Faro by their sound. Up until their marriage, the young girls wear a loincloth passed between their legs and held in place by eight bead belts. When they are married, women wear the loincloth open, attached at the waist, and a cotton handkerchief covers
[854] their hair. When a child is born, another cloth knotted at the chest holds the infant astraddle on the mother's back A chief's wife
[554] wore a piece of material made of seven bands which she threw over her shoulder. Very young boys wear short drawers whose form varies with the age classes. Later they are dressed in a short tunic with a neck opening cut out and fitted sleeves, and in ample short breeches
[80] formed of three bands (the masculine number), passing between the legs and three bands on each side covering the thighs. The waist is also encircled by four times three bands, numbers of femininity and of masculinity. Over their clothes, men and women wear a large cloak with an opening cut out in the middle for the head and whose ends are sown together, leaving large openings on each side. These cloaks have a large pocket in front and are embroidered with symbolic

291 [177] designs. European influence has naturally made itself felt in the fashions, and European thread is replacing native cotton thread, but the color symbolism in the bands is retained. Even though European fabrics invade the markets more and more, the traditional clothes remain the most sought after, although they have undergone certain modifications inspired by European fashions even while remaining very original.

291 531 585 Although the Bambara go barefoot, in certain circumstances they make ornamented clogs to give to the new bride. These sandals are decorated with geometric designs, engraved with a hot iron by the blacksmith, that symbolize the twinship, the multiplication of children, the parents, the husband's family, the couple's language, and the sealing of the association. These signs are encircled by the sign of the union of the whole. Also, the whole ritual of taking possession lasts for several days.

302 Coiffure. At the present time, the adult males no longer wear the traditional coiffure consisting of two plaits at the side, but the children still have their hair shaved and braided according to custom. Thus, the uncircumcised boys wear a crest of hair going from the forehead to the nape of the neck, while the rest of the head is shaved. The crest symbolizes the [99] divine serpent. The children of blacksmiths also wear, at the sides of the head, two circles of hair which are cut by lines representing the forge. When a child is born after the death of several brothers and sisters, only half of his head is shaved in mockery, so that the dya subject to this pretended neglect will decide to stay in the child. The children of Marabouts have their hair shaved in such a manner that it forms a spiral which starts in the middle of the skull and covers the whole head. Afterwards, bands of hair are shaved in a manner to trace a cross on this spiral. The little girls wear a small braid across the forehead, falling on the left side, while married women wear a braid at each side of the head. These braids are made by adding fibers of the da, shining with karite, plaited with the hair. Finally, the women wear 301 22 gold rings at the ears, images of the 22 primordial elements, or sometimes a single large ring in the form of a crescent closed by threads of red cotton, which is a résumé of the 22 others. These rings keep impure words from the ear, which plays an important [176] role in generation; it is through the ornamentation that the spirits hear what is said to man.

869 794 778 In addition to wearing the costume, which is white (n'tomo djé) or yellow, black, etc. (n'tomo fign), the boy who dances the dance of the genie hides his face in a frightful wooden mask on top of which are five, seven, and sometimes eight horns.

869 794 561 The n'tomo injects a whole organization into the world of children. They quite naturally divide themselves into small groups, each corresponding to a circumcision that is to take

[291 293]

Child wearing the loincloth called yaba.

place, and are thus all of the same age, born in the same year, or very nearly so. The member of each group who is the oldest -- be it by only one day -- becomes its head, and all the younger heads obey the head of the oldest group, the n'tomotigi, and his aide, the n'tomotigi siéré (1), who is drawn from

1. Siéré, "aide," "deputy."

the group which will be circumcised after that

776 Such a spirit is the exclusive property of one family, and even
624 bears its name, or diamou. Its sacrificer, called gnéna-n-sonnaba,
793 also bears the name of dougoutigi (1); he is, in fact, the real head of

1. Gnena, "fetish," "genie"; sonnaba, "great sacrificer"; dougou, "village"; tigi, "head," "master."

[291 516]

Typical Bambara headman.

the village. Although at present the civil and religious authorities
[554] are separate in many places, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or religious priest, always holds precedence, and self-respecting people call him dougoutigi (head of the village), giving the title of sotigi (2) to the

2. So, "hut," "house"; tigi, "head."

one who has only civil authority. Here we have further evidence that the organization of the Bambara nation was, at its origin purely religious. The separation of the two authorities in certain hamlets can easily be understood.

631 Under the Bambara dynasty the kingdom of Ségou was divided into provinces, cantons, and villages. The king, Fama or Massa

776 village and in our families; grant us plenty and wealth, give us many
782 wives, healthy and vigorous children, and a long and hearty old age."
796 If the occasion is semipublic /109/ or public, a general sacrifice is always offered in the name of the family, the quarter, or the village, and then individual sacrifices follow. On the days when they are held, there are always dances and drinking bouts, for the favors of a fetish cannot be obtained except by leaping to the sound of drums and by getting drunk.

At the risk of repeating myself, I cannot resist giving the fascinating side of the Negroes' attachment to their fetishism and describing the festivals and celebrations in honor of the principal fetishes -- in order that the reader may gain a greater understanding and feeling for their worship.

The N'tomo, the Special Children's Fetish

852 The harvest is over, and the yield of the field cultivated by the
796 children during the winter, together with the small donations received from the people of the village, allows the n'tomigi (head of the confraternity) and his siéré (aide, deputy) to furnish its initiates and the old men -- the latter are never forgotten -- with a plentiful feast of kola nuts, millet beer, or d'lo, and /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, or dégé. The day of the celebration is set by the head of the village and by the elders, and everyone prepares for it two weeks in advance. In the blon, or entrance huts, and in the
852 shade of trees, one sees nothing but old men cutting and sewing dloki,
796 bougi, bogo, and yaba (1), which will be worn for the first time on
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1. Dloki, a large blouse. Bougi, near Ségou, a kind of pants without legs; in Bani country, a strip of cloth three to four fingers wide which goes around the waist, passes between the thighs, and drops in back, forming flaps over the heavy part of the thighs.

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The end of this strip is tucked up. Bogo, garment worn by girls until their marriage, consisting of a strip of cloth tied at the waist and falling in back to make a train. Yaba, boys' jacket, especially common in Bani country.

that day. A swarm of children patch the yellow or white blouses that will be worn during the dance, and grease and re-grease the mask of the n'tomo. They pay special attention to the horns, which are often hidden under little thongs of red leather decorated from end to end with well-polished cowrie shells as white as snow.

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But now we come to the longed-for day! All the little rebels go single file to the fetish tree, and each carries the hen, its feet tied, which he intends for the sacrifice. They /110/ all take off their blouses -- the little undergarment allows freer movement and is less hampering -- and, after some whispering they finally end up squatting, fixing their big, black eyes on the leader, the n'tomotigi, who begins the sacrifice with the assistance of his aide, the siéré.

This little fellow is really funny, as with the solemnity of an old man he pours the dégé, sprinkles the blood of the hens, and noisily spits the remains of a piece of chewed kola nut onto the sacred tree, the dwelling of his genie. I do not doubt that he is convinced, and thoroughly convinced, that he is not addressing a tree trunk that has no consciousness; he believes that he is in the presence of who watches him, waits for him, and asks only to grant his wishes. Since he is addressing a powerful being, fear and emotion at first make him tremble; but gradually his voice grows firmer, and very clearly he pronounces his formula: "N'tomo ye, see this hen, a beautiful hen, isn't it? It is fat! n'tomo, on behalf of all of us I offer you this hen as a sacrifice. Favor us, defend us against the fury of the genii of the bush and against the malicious. Make us strong and vigorous, give us plenty to eat and drink, drive sickness from us. Give us water and a good harvest, n'tomo, and give wealth to our families."

852 79 782 After this special sacrifice come the individual sacrifices, and the very young boys who are henceforth to belong to the n'tomo prostrate themselves before the fetish tree and take an oath to reveal nothing to the uninitiated, and especially not to little girls. This oath is not at all trivial: "If you talk, if you reveal your oath, " says the leader showing each one some black powder, "you will die." And they all reply without trembling: "May I die!"

852 796 When the rite of admission is over, each initiate plucks his hen and draws it, and while the victims simmer over the fire in an earthen conari, the youngsters beat drums and abandon themselves to the dance, and so into a frenzy which continues under the eye of the fetish, in the shade of its preferred tree until the time of the feast. Each child in turn dances the dance of the fetish, which consists of leaps and capers and a graceful twirling of a flexible switch. To dance he dons [292] the white or yellow blouse of the fetish (n'tomo ka dloki, "the blouse of the n'tomo"), which is white (dje) or black, yellow (fign, as I said in the preceding chapter) /sic/ /111/, and takes the horned mask, the n'tomo kongolo ("head of the n'tomo") by means of which he externalizes in a concrete form his concept of the genie.

Victims abound, and the feast is plentiful. There is enough for everybody, and there is not one on that day who does not lick his fingers and say with a smile: "Ne ne fara de! (1). How full I am!"

1. Né, "me, " "I"; fara, "am full"; dé, "surely."

The little boys' families contribute much, for Bambara mothers and little sisters have good hearts. Thanks to them, every initiate can offer from 10 to 20 liters of dégé, the same amount of d'lo; and his gourd of to (gruel) holds enough to tire six to eight big eaters. In addition to the dessert, which is kola nut, each boy receives a new garment for himself and a light bogo and sometimes a tafé (2) for

[291] 2. Tafé, rectangular piece of cloth which the women wear around their hips.

4. All Negroes do not resort to the gnâma daha. But then they are not limited to a single means of handling

Costume of a Bâmbara hunter.

the problem; they have more than one string to their bow. Immediately after killing a fur-bearing animal, every hunter empties the urine by pressure or cutting.

778 them, they have unlimited power. They render justice, oaths are taken on them, they exorcise all evils to some degree, they give fertility to the sterile, they have the right of life and death over human beings, and it is to them that appeal is made for vengeance on an enemy.

[291 534]

Nia ngoni: the harp of the Nia fetish

778 534 Chief among these fetishes are the Komo, the Nama, the Kono, the Nia, the Wara (or Djara), the Djo and the Magna, also called Tjaro fign. All of them have their special drums and musical instruments, and some, like the Nia and the Magna, even have an entire band. The band of the Nia consists primarily of guitars, skin bags, and small baskets in the shape of hourglasses filled with stones or bits of scrap iron. That of the Magna consists of one or /147/ two long

181 me, and it seems to me that the Bambara might describe himself as: "A man sufficiently master of himself to be able always to agree with you without ever revealing his inner thoughts."

Their character is not made up entirely of vices, however, and I have been told by earnest men that the Bambara never, at least in public, practice those familiarities with women which shock and wound every person of high principles. They have added that the two [674] crimes of adultery and fornication are unusual with them, and this, one may be sure, is less on account of the severe penalties which they incur (it seems that before the French conquest the punishment was death without reprieve), than because they are without feelings, that 181 is, strong passions. Their women can without any difficulty go around •291 with bare bosoms, breasts exposed, hips girded with a paltry rag knotted under the navel, and their young girls are satisfied with their small strip of cloth, three fingers wide, which is knotted in front at the waist, slides between the legs, and is caught up in back by the cord, to fall in a long train decorated by a gorgeous pompon the size of a fist. They did not tell me, of course, but /158/ they gave me to understand quite well that if it were absolutely necessary the girls could without blushing go around in the scant garb of children who roll in the dust dressed as on the day they were born, quite naked. Nakedness cannot stir a Negro; beauty does not excite his eyes, for he does not have the feeling for it. And for a long time I believed the Bambara to be endowed with an angelic nature.

189 All these beautiful thoughts have left me, and I must admit 831 that the Bambara are hideously degraded! Every day has made the matter clearer to me, for when I have left the mission to go to the surrounding villages, as the duties of my office oblige me to do several times a week, I have seen the same scenes again and again, heard the same songs and the same conversations, and I have found nothing very angelic in any of them. If I went into a field, I saw young men bent over their hoes, backs running with sweat, who got up and jumped, shouted the most raucous "you you," and made an obscene gesture. If a little girl, a child, came to give them a jug of cool water, she would get a coarse word as thanks and payment, and often, not to say almost always, a rough hand would remind her

843 One last discreet word about the pregnant women: Their loin-
•291 cloths, the cloth rags with which they gird their hips, are held in place by means of a cord, a common string knotted below the navel, a very unsightly thing, or sometimes by means of a colored cloth, a red handkerchief, for example, folded in a triangle.

842 A male child, is more highly valued than a girl, and to obtain
789 this blessing the Bambara consult sorcerers and diviners and sacrifice to the boli fetishes. The women have great confidence in amulets, and they wear hung at the waist many dirty bags which form an ugly roll under the tafe, or loincloth (the knotted cord, tafo, is worn around the hips). Some wear their "boy bringer" where it can be seen; it is a square leather bag three fingers wide which contains medicine: bits of bark and wood, and sometimes a goat's horn which the woman slips between her thighs (1). /168/

1. This horn is also often worn in order that the child may have a perfect body, or so as not to have a premature delivery. Nicolay says that these talismans or magic objects, which are capable of changing the course of events and even of nature, are made and sold by sorcerers. /Fernand Nicolay, Curiosités des lois et coutumes. Histoire des croyances, superstitions, moeurs, usages et coutumes (selon le plan du Décalogue) /Curiosities among Laws and Customs. A History of Beliefs, Superstitions, Manners, Usages and Customs (according to the Outline of the Decalogue), Paris: V. Retaux, 1901./

844 Birth of a child. -- In Bambara country the "demon" usually takes part in the joys and sorrows of the family. However, I have

88] as ugly as possible, and plays the fool. Armed with a long stick -- the stick which is used to stir the gruel that is simmering on the fire (1) -- she darts out of the village, agile as a gazelle. Her companions

[415]

1. To-n-galama: a stick with a large, flattened end, used to stir gruel in the pot.

all chase her at a full run, giving many shouts; they circle around the walls four times. At every fork in the path they form a circle, dance with frenzy, and throw large handfuls of basi and smoked fish sauce to the spirits without keeping count. "Dégé dounlé, idiots," shouts the smeared girl, and all her retinue repeats with ever increasing enthusiasm: "Nalouma, big fool...." And this day, which is not very edifying, is full of delights for the little Bambara girls who are to be excised.

The little soli boys are satisfied with sacrificing to n'tomo, a good fetish which is their protector, but although they dance wearing masks with six, seven, and sometimes eight horns, they do not flagellate themselves, or at least flagellation is not required on this day. [785]

2. The Soli Si Festival, or the Vigil of the Circumcised

Here we are on the eve of the circumcision! It is black night, d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer, hums and foams in the earthenware bowls, and a thin mist comes out of all the huts and envelops them. Here karité grease sputters as it melts in the pot and browns the skin of a chicken or the leg of a goat; there one hears the loud laughter of people with full stomachs, the hiccups of a glutton, the dry and decisive sound of two heavy lips releasing five great /178/ sticky fingers glued to each other by a remainder of gruel. Their foreheads [30] decorated with beads in a kind of crown of white, red, and yellow, • 291] the colors of the rainbow, and their bodies draped in blankets, Roman style, groups of women glide silently like shadows along the alleys, carrying on their heads huge gourds full of dégé, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk.

585 awaiting her, they undo her young girl's hair; they take off the cloth ribbon three /210/ fingers wide which is fastened in front at her waist and passes between the legs to fall behind in a loose, soft train; they unknot her belt of beads and bells; they help her to take her bath and lay her on the couch, rolled in a loincloth (1).

1. This ceremony terminating the wearing of a young girl's attire is often carried out in the village before leaving, especially if the village to which the bride is going is far away and will not be reached until late at night.

Suddenly all the guns are fired and many loud "kouyo kouyo" ring out, overpowering the songs, the noise of the drums, and that of feet beating on the ground in rhythm, and old women with wrinkled, parchment-like skin rush into the hut with warm water for ablutions(2).

2. This whole scene takes place in the morning, a few moments before sunrise.

Dressed in his new blouse, the groom leaves the dwelling of his bride, greets the strangers who fill his court, and sits down on the mat with the fourouboloma tigi and his close friends. The bride also quickly appears and walks across the court. She is dressed in
•[291] the loincloth of married women which is held at the waist by a thin cord while graceful red and white pompons, often marked with yellow and green lines, hang discreetly at the sides along her thighs. She walks with timid eyes, her head bowed, and a band of women story-tellers /griottes/ (singers) follow her with their songs of love; they tell of the delicacy of her skin, the elegance of her form, the breadth of her torso, the firmness of her breasts. There is still more -- and at the very least one would blush; the old women in back shake a large, bloody white cloth (3), which bears witness to her virginity

4: Henry--264 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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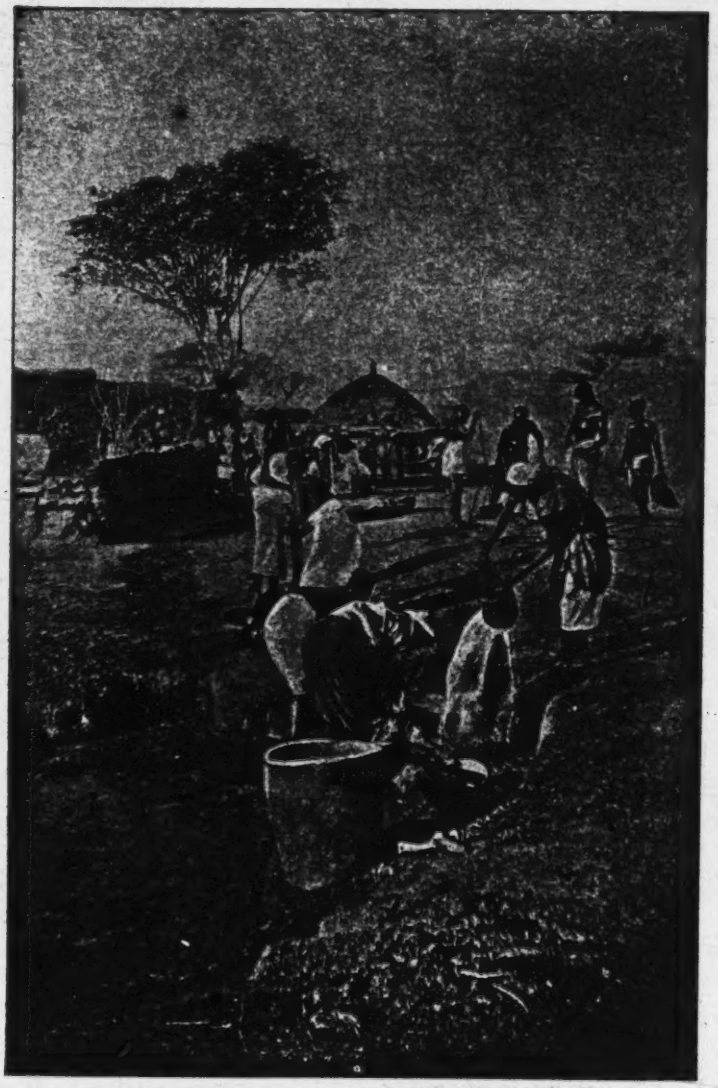

At the edge of the well, in Bambara country.

4: Henry--270 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Festival of the N'golo fetish: An outing of the to-n-de, of the association of the fla-n-to.

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4: Henry--273 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Procession of the Tji wara: the young people meet at the field to work under the eyes of two companions dressed in the insignia of the fetish of work.

4: Henry--279 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Tattoo worn by the women of Bani country.

Tattoo worn around the breasts by young girls of Ségou and made by themselves.

4: Henry--281 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Young Bambara girls dressed to go out.

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Circumcised youth dressed up.

4: Henry--283 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Bambara wedding.
The meal is carried to the young bride and her maids of honor (at Moundjirila).

4: Henry--284 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Bambara wedding: the guests go to thank the young bride after the meal. Above: Bambara wedding: procession of a young bride going to the home of her groom.

4: Henry--285 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Bambara burial.
The corpse being laid in the grave.